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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 7954
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 3988
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 2514
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 004797

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TAGS: [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: MGPK01: SITREP 12, ELECTIONS TO BE HELD BY FEB 15;
BHUTTO TO "RISK LIFE" FOR RALLY

REF: ISLAMABAD 04776

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: President Musharraf announced today that national elections would take place before February 15 and that he would resign as Chief of Army Staff when the newly constituted Supreme Court rules on his election case. Bhutto exhorted supporters to join a PPP rally in Rawalpindi November 9 despite government efforts to block it. The Ministry of Information announced today that it would restore eight to ten networks, as long as they agree to a strenuous code of conduct allowing for government content control. Major TV channels have still refused to comply with the code of conduct. All Mission offices continue to operate normally. End summary.

Elections by February 14

12. (C) National Security Advisor, Tariq Aziz confirmed media reports that President Musharraf has decided to hold elections by February 15. Further, Musharraf will resign as Chief of Army Staff after the newly reconstituted Supreme Court rules on the pending case regarding his eligibility for the election he won on October 6.

PPP Rally to Proceed

13. (U) During a press conference, Pakistan People's Party leader Benazir Bhutto exhorted supporters and others who opposed the state of emergency to participate in a planned PPP rally in Rawalpindi on November 9 despite efforts by the government to block it. Bhutto stated that she would "risk her life" by leading the rally. Ref A reports on GOP requests that the U.S. convince Bhutto to stop the rally or face house arrest. PPP contacts say the rally will proceed despite reports of suicide bombers in Islamabad. The PPP claims that the GOP is not providing necessary support in the form of either transportation or security for tomorrow's gathering.

14. (C) Ghafoor Haidri, an official within Jamaat-i Islami (JI), confirms Geo TV reporting that the police did not allow JI members inside Mansoorah to hold a Mutahida Majlis Amal (MMA religious parties group) Supreme Council meeting. Because of this refusal, Haidri and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUIF) leader Maulan Fazlur Rehman, are being forced to hold their meeting in an undisclosed location. Qazi Hussain

Ahmed, the leader of JI, will not be in attendance in that he is currently under house arrest in Mansoorah.

Consulate Reports

¶5. Karachi: Courts are proceeding despite a lawyers' boycott. At this time, protests by the lawyers, political parties, journalists, or civil society organizations are not expected.

¶6. Punjab/Lahore: Approximately 150 PPP members were arrested in Lahore and another 400 in other Punjab cities following a series of party rallies in Punjab province. According to sources, the numbers are likely to increase significantly tonight in an attempt to ruin tomorrow's PPP rally scheduled in Rawalpindi.

¶7. Peshawar: Although roughly 1000 protesters were expected, JI managed to recruit only 350 protesters today in a peaceful demonstration. A second JI demonstration is expected in the Northwest Frontier Province tomorrow.

Possible Media Restoration

¶8. After several days of only the government-run PTV on the air and the wily Geo TV network skirting the system, the Minister of Information announced that 8 to 10 channels will once again be able for viewing, including Business Plus, CNBC, BBC, CNN, and Al-Jazeera. However, these channels must agree to a strenuous government-imposed code of conduct, leaving several of the more popular stations, including Dawn and AAJ, to make the choice of government-controlled content

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or more time off the air. As of 1830 local time, only CNBC is being distributed.

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